

[Willie Addison Posey]

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Range-lore

Ruby Mosley,

San Angelo, Texas. Tales - Life on a Ranch [Interview?]

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RANGE-LORE

Willie Addison Posey was born in Burleson County in 1860. His Father and grandfather were ranchmen and went up the trail many times. Mr. Posey's father and grandfather were slave owners, and when their slaves were given their freedom they did not leave their masters. The Poseys, Martins, and Arch Ratcliff's families came with their herds to Brown County in 1876, where ranching was continued on a large scale. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

"My father, W. H. Posey, grandfather, J. C. Posey, and Uncle Sam Scott sent cattle up the trail from Williamson 2 County to Montana," says Mr. Willie Addison Posey.

"My father was captain of the trail drive. They came by the way of San Angelo when the negro soldiers were stationed here. Father and his outfit camped out here behind a bank of the river for protection from the weather and where the cattle could have water. The commanding officer came out and warned them to move on as his soldiers needed target practice. They moved on in a hurry; the wind was cold, the cattle was hungry, thirsty and weak. This move caused a loss of about 300 head of cattle.

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"Father and his outfit made it on to Horse Head Crossing on the Pecos River, where the Indians made a raid and got most of their horses, then the outfit blooded the Indians trail but didn't know if any were killed or not.

"The next obstacle they met was securing food as they passed through Arizona. The public will rob any time that they catch you in a spot. Father had to pay one dollar per pound for butter and one dollar per dozen for eggs, and other things were equally as high. When they got to Montana father sold the cattle and was paid in gold from saddle bags. That country seemed to be rather prosperous and father liked it so well that he contracted for a place. He left the chuck wagon, bunk and horses and started on a trip with expectation of returning, but after reaching New York, where he visited, 3 he with an other white man and negro returned to Texas by water, landing at Galveston. Then they went on to Williamson County and never went back to Montana.

"When I was a little fellow about 8 years of age an old cattle buyer came to our house and spent several days. He put the saddle in the hall where sister and I played with the saddle bags stuffed with gold. When time came for the cow buyer to leave he had to cross the Brazos River which was on a rise and his horse had to swim. While crossing, the saddle bags of gold lost off. Father and a gang dragged the river for several hours before they located the saddle bags. Only a few pieces were lost in the river. Sister and I felt pretty guilty an we knew that we had untied the bags from the saddle.

"Gold was the most common exchange at that time. I remember when my grandfather accused old Porter (a negro slave) of taking his money. Grandfather had filled a shot sack full of gold pieces and put it in the back of a bureau drawer but when he went to get it he couldn't find it. They put old Porter on a rope and pulled him up a tree. Every one gathered around to see the punishment. They let him down but he said, 'No Sir, Master, I didn't get your money.' They drew him up again, and he gave the same answer. This act was repeated four times, receiving the same answer each time. The next time they let him down he said, 'Yes, Sir, I got it.' 4 He was about gone this time, his eyes sticking out and

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he could hardly speak; soon he passed out. The doctor came and worked with him a long time before he gained consciousness. A few days later the shot sack of gold was found hung on a splinter away back in the bureau drawer where it had been all the time. This has made me a much better man today; I wont accuse anyone of anything until I know, first. I wish half of the people of today were half as honest and religious as those darkies. I was only five years old when they were set free but all of grandfather's slaves stayed with him for years afterward.

"My father had only one slave and he was given to him for a birthday present from grandfather, as the slave and father was the same age.

"One time I was over in Milam County looking for stray cattle. I passed through a little town by the name of Milano Junction. The convicts were building a railroad through there and the old guard pranced around on his fine steed with guns and black snake in readiness for anyone shirking his duty. An old fellow sat down and said, 'I'm sick, I can't hit another lick.' He was pale and weak; looked as if he would faint at any time. The damned old guard came by and gave him a lick with the black snake and yelled out an oath that he will never get by with. The old man made it to his feet and tried to work. I rode on; this was a horrible sight for anyone's eyes. When I came back 5 a little later the old fellow was dead. Who will answer for such crimes? Human beings don't have a chance unless they have money. What would happen to me if I killed a man? A man is a man in the sight of God, poor or rich. This is the only satisfaction we poor devils have.

"My wife's grandfather, Mr. Baker, and his half brother, Mr. Soul, were killed by the Indians about seven miles from Austin. One morning they went after the cows; Mr. Baker rode a mighty fast pony and Mr. Soul rode a mule. When the Indians attacked Mr. Soul had no chance to get away. Indications of the surroundings showed there must have been a terrible fight. The Indians killed Mr. Baker, took his heart out, took his scalp and set him up against a tree. Mr. Soul was killed but his body was not molested. Mr. Baker must have

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shown some act of bravery as the position in which the Indians left him was significant of some bravery.

“The Poseys and Martins left Burleson County in the spring of 1876 to bring herds and families to Brown County.

“We were doing just fine with our herd until we got down about Rockdale. Papa was on guard and had the cattle in a little lane. Something caused a stampede; we never knew what. Papa ran to a sapling and stood as close as he could for cattle never run over trees. We got the cattle all rounded by the next morning and ready to continue on our journey.
6 “When we got to Williamson County, Arch Ratcliff, his family and herd, joined us and on we went.

“We had another little stampede in Williamson County. They went about eight miles before we got them stopped. A few were killed, some had horns knocked off, and others were crippled. The inspectors came out and wanted to inspect our herds. In those days there were no tick laws and my father, grandfather, Mr. Martin, and Mr. Ratcliff objected to the inspection and that was settled. They wouldn't give a fake inspector a fee. I was rather small but that incident always stands out in my memory when I think of the trip to Brown County.

“One time I went back down in Bell and Williamson Counties. Old Booger Red was asking about work around here and I told him he could get plenty of work. He got his duds ready and come with me to San Angelo. I ran into Berry Ketchum and he was wanting some one to break a bunch of wild horses. I told him I had the right man; here is where Booger got acquainted with this area. I was working for Charlie Collins and he sold out to the March brothers. I ran the ranch for them several years. Old Booger Red went with our bunch to Fort Worth. All riders had to sign for saddles. Everyone registered except Booger and we started out to go down town for a while. The manager asked Booger Red to come back and sign. He said, 'Hell, if a son-of-a-b—comes in here any uglier than I am, give it to him.'

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The manager replied, 'You're safe enough in a case like that, no one will get your saddle.'"

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Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Willie Addison Posey, San Angelo Texas, interviewed, January, 1938.